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ARRIVAL SPEECH by Monsignor PIE

DELIVERED FOLLOWING THE SOLEMN ENTRANCE IN THE CATHEDRAL OF POITIERS.

(DECEMBER 8, 1849)

Who are you?
Who are you ?
Jean, I, 19.

I. To the people who had left the city, who had advanced into the desert to contemplate John the Baptist, the divine Master addressed this question: "What did you go to see?"

I will ask you the same question today, my very dear Brothers: Quid existis videre (Luke, VII, 24)? Why this crowd leaving the house, the city? What show has put on this immense multitude of all ages, all sexes, all conditions?

Again, what did you go to see? Is it a man dressed with luxury and with softness? Sed quid existis videre? Hominem mollibus vestimentis indutum? No ; for those who are so dressed are found in the houses of kings (Luke, VII, 25). Now the houses of kings are deserted at this hour. The word of the prophet has been fulfilled before our eyes: I will destroy, saith the Lord, the winter palace and the summer palace; the houses of ivory will be pillaged (Amos, III, 15). For some time now, all those who had been brought up in delights have walked on rough paths (Ba ruch, IV, 25); and please God that this is not only the beginning of sorrows (Mark, XIII, 8).

As for us, your looks will certainly have created no illusion in you about those few threads of gold and silk which custom has attached to our sacred ornaments, and which have nothing in common with the vain preparations of a profane adornment. Moreover, the courtiers are recognizable by the fact that the softness of their language agrees with that of their clothes; and the accent of our voice has already revealed to you that we are not of this race, and that we were not formed in this school: Ecce qui in veste pretiosa sunt et deliciis, in domibus regum sunt.

But still, what did you go to see? Is it a reed shaken by the wind: arundinem vento agitatam? Do you notice, my Brethren, in the question posed by the Saviour, this singular alternative, or better, this singular comparison: a courtier or a reed? Isn't there, in fact, more than one point of resemblance between the one and the other?
Is it not in both the same suppleness, the same inconsistency, with the same inanity?

The incomparable doctor whose disciple I am henceforth for all my life, and whom I should echo today in this pulpit, Saint Hilary, develops this text thus: "The reed, he says, has elegance, it swings its stem gracefully, but it contains nothing solid; its bark is shiny, polished, pleasant, but the interior is null: exterior placens, and nullus interior. Thus the man of the century. It has the shining veneer of worldly education, but it is hollow and void of the fruit of truth; to the specious beauty of the outside corresponds the perfect nullity of the inside; it is without firmness and consistency; his mobility complacently bends to all the demands of favor, he obeys without resistance to all the winds of opinion; it does not contain within itself any marrow of the spirit or of the will". Tell me, is that what you went looking for? a man empty of the knowledge of God and floating at the whim of all filthy breaths: Num quid existis videre hominem cognitione Dei vacuum, et ad immundorum spirituum flatum vagantem?

No, my Brethren; in coming to meet him who is sent to you, your legitimate expectation has counted on something else. In the order of religion, the words of Jesus Christ are still true: "You went out to see a prophet, and more than a prophet: Sed quid existis videre? prophetam? Utique dico vobis, et plus quam prophetam" (Luke, VII, 26).
That's what resounded in your streets just now, that's what I read written on one of your triumphal arches. "And you, once still a simple child of Israel, you will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will walk before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways": Et tu, puer, propheta altissimi vocaberis; preibis enim ante faciem Domini parare vias ejus (Luke, I, 76).

II. But then "Who are you then?" you say to me as to John: "Who are you, so that we can give an account of it to those who will question us on our return to our homes: Dixerunt ei: Quis es? ut responsum demus his qui miserunt nos?» (John, I, 22)

My Brothers, it is still Saint Hilary who will give me my answer. "Episcopus ego sum: I AM BISHOP". This word contains everything, this word says it all.

I AM BISHOP : I will therefore be a father, I will be a pastor; I will love you as the father loves his children; I will guide you and feed you as the pastor leads and feeds his sheep. It is my duty, it will also be my happiness to accomplish this double mission for you. Your filial affection, your pious docility will make it easy for me. It is recommended to the pastor to "look at the face of his flock: Agnosce vultum pecoris tui et greges tuos considera

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(Prov, XXVII, 23). What I read today about your faces revealed your souls to me. What hearts I have seen shine on your brows and in your smiles! I can tell you like Paul to the Galatians: Yes, despite my obscurity, "you did not despise me and reject me, but you welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus" (Galat, IV , 14).

It is true, I have taken care to reach you under the auspices of the Immaculate Virgin. By celebrating the son she sends you, you also wanted to celebrate the Mother. This is why your whole city was today only a church: the streets, the squares, the markets, the very air were as if sanctified. Under the impression of these so beautiful and so sweet pomps, it seems to me that I feel in me from this day what the Holy Scriptures call the entrails of paternal and not oral love and that I will have no effort to make to cherish you and give you all kinds of testimonies of it.

But the bishop is still something other than the father of a family and than a pastor. The meaning of his name indicates this. He is primarily "an overseer". From the observation post on which he is placed, he must observe, consider and, if necessary, issue the cry of alarm. Sentinel of truth, defender of the rights of God, guardian of souls: these are sacred titles for the bishop, which carry with them inflexible obligations, indeclinable responsibilities.

Episcopus ego sum: I AM BISHOP. If therefore you expect me to be the man of peace, the man of conciliation, of condescension, of charity, you assume nothing but the truth. With the grace of God I will be such among you. But my duties will not end there, and it may be that circumstances impose upon me others which you would be less prepared to understand.

Episcopus ego sum: I AM BISHOP. As such, I am among you the consul of the divine majesty, the ambassador and charge d'affaires of God. If the name of the King my Master is outraged, if the flag of His Son Jesus is not respected, if the rights of His Church and His priesthood are disregarded, if the integrity of His doctrine is threatened: I AM BISHOP , therefore I will speak, I will raise my voice, I will hold high and firm the standard of truth, the standard of true freedom, which is none other than the standard of faith, the standard of my God. The pusillanimous may be surprised, minds of a certain stamp may even be scandalized. This is why I wanted to express myself freely today, because you cannot suspect at this hour the abundance of charity which overflows from my

III. Peace: yes, without a doubt, it is the ardent desire of my heart, it is the need of my nature, it is the marked inclination of my character. But the Holy Spirit taught me that the love of truth must come before any other love, even before the love of peace: VERITATEM TANTUM ET PACEM DILIGITE (Zachar, VIII, 19). One of the prayers that was pronounced over my head on the day of my episcopal consecration was this: " THAT HE LOVE THE TRUTH, AND NEVER ABANDON IT, NOR UNDER FEAR. , NOR UNDER THE EMPIRE OF FLATTERY : veritatem diligat, neque eam unquam deserat, aut laudibus aut timore superatus". And the experience that the world has just had must have taught you all, my Brothers, how fruitful error is in calamities of all kinds. Have confidence therefore in our ministry, and be determined to respect our words and our deeds, even when you happen not to understand them. Allow us to safeguard, in their causes and in their principles, the effects and consequences to which you attach so much value; let us work for you sometimes in spite of you; and remember that, from the tops of the mountain, the shepherd sees higher and further than the sheep stretched limply in the plain.

No, I will cry out with the prophet, no, "for Zion I will not be silent, and for Jerusalem I will have no rest: propter Zion non tacebo, et propter Jerusalem non quiescam" (Isa., LXII , 1), until the Savior Jesus, rejected by the insolence of the men of our time, rises again on the world to light it up with His rays and save it with this salutary radiance. What your great doctor said here to your fathers, the spectacle of contemporary things has sufficiently confirmed: "there is nothing so calamitous for the world as not having received Jesus Christ: Et quid mundo tam periculosum quam non receptisse Christum?"

Also the less Christian minds agree at present to encourage the independence of our ministry, the boldness of our word. In these days of confusion and disorder, if the prophets are silent, who will speak? If the pulpits of truth are dumb, then who will revive the rights of truth? Let it be enough for you to know that our zeal will invariably be guided by charity, and that if we are ever compelled to make war, it will always be for the purpose of making peace, the only one worthy of the name, which is PEACE IN TRUTH: pacem in veritate.

This peace, my beloved Brothers, I wish it to you all today with all the outpouring of the tenderness of my soul; to my brothers in the priesthood, and to those elite souls who have dedicated themselves to the practice of evangelical perfection; to men constituted in dignity, and to all those who are placed under their authority; to the great and to the small, to the rich and to the poor; to old men and young men; husbands and wives; to fathers and children; to the just and the sinners; to the faithful disciples of the Church, and to our separated brethren who have had the misfortune to be born outside of her maternal bosom; in a word, to all those whom the grace of God and of the Apostolic See has entrusted to my care: May the blessing of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit desce

Works of the Bishop of Poitiers,
T. I, p. 128 to 134. Oudin, 1873, 4th ed.

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WE WILL READ WITH EDUCATION THE FAMILIAR AND PATERNAL RESPONSE OF M. LECOMTE, HIS MASTER, HIS ADVISOR, HIS FRIEND, CURE OF THE CATHEDRAL OF CHARTRES, TO THE LETTER OF THE NEW PRELATE WHO ASKED HIM FOR HIS ADVICE ON THE APPROACH OF THE RECOMMENDATION AND OF THE SACRED.

“My dear Lord and tender friend... I congratulate you and I congratulate even more our Mother the Church on seeing today the judicious choice of men authentically confirmed by that of God in the person of His Vicar. I will be very touched and very happy to be able to attend your coronation.

You have the humility, dear friend, to ask me for a few words drawn from the source of my poor heart. I should send you to the waters of your own fountain. But Jethro, priest of Midian, gave some useful advice to Moses, Supreme Pontiff, consecrator of Aaron.

You will love Our Lord more tenderly than ever. Amaze me? Diligis me? This is the pastor's primary virtue. It is also his first joy and his sweetest consolation. It is his rest after fatigue, and his light in teaching; it is the sleep of love on the bosom of the Lord. One finds there relaxation and milk of celestial sapience. But what am I saying? you will do much better than anything I could advise you in this matter.

Keep your conscience joyful and holy free, to be able to sanctify others. We can hardly oc taking others when you are too preoccupied with yourself.

I will say nothing to you, my dear Lord, of what you will do to spread everywhere, everywhere, in your diocese, tender piety towards the Blessed Virgin whose darling child you are and to whom you owe everything. Make her much loved by your priests, that will make her much loved by your flock. Go, teach the love of Mary to all the faithful of your country, it is the mission with which the poor wretch has invested you, from whom all power has been taken away, but who puts all his impowers, his infirmities and his pains at the service of your tender heart and your fruitful intelligence.

Cherish your priests very much: this is the recipe for being cherished by them. Honor them all, even the less pleasant ones: it is teaching them to honor themselves. Sow them a measure of respect, you will reap a thousand measures. Cordialize them holy and with gracious dignity.

Be, with regard to your young seminarians, the Jesus of John: they will be the Johns of Jesus to you. It is especially this little field, whose virgin soil is so loose and so rich in juices and nourishing principles, it is this little field that will have to be cultivated and watered. It's not even a field, it's a garden, the areola aromatum. You will plant many lilies there for the delights of the Beloved, and you will place in the middle fontem hortorum... Mary will be the queen and the mother of all your seminarians. It will be necessary to go to the diocese of Poitiers to take lessons of love for Mary.

As for the administration, always untie as much as possible; never to break, unless there is a necessity of which one must moan, and soften the rigor by delicacy and prudence in the form. But you know so well how to circumvent the difficulty without renouncing the goal, or rather to reach it more surely!... Only delicate and strong natures know these secrets and can apply them.

Don't please all at once, please long. Like the sun which, after the winter solstice, bringing us back summer through the frosts, always advances and ends up being victorious as a whole, even when it seems to retreat and be defeated in detail, we must suffer from appearing defeated in order to better triumph...

Be yourself. It takes a lot of strength to move only on your own and to know how to resist eager advice, or impassioned advice, which is met with even more often.

For the choice of pastors, prefer modest merit, after having seen it with your own eyes; go and seek the merit which lies hidden behind the others. Make the latter first. Dismiss gently and without hurting him, the merit that occurs and seeks the attention of his superiors. This one is not of good quality, or, to put it better, this merit is not merit, it is sufficiency and ambition. Do not listen to the enthusiastic recommendations of the ladies. Do not systematically exclude them either: they can put you on the path to true merit, especially when they are solidly pious and humble.

Revive Our Lord! Let people say behind you: Oh it's Jesus returned to earth and conversing among men. Smile to all, to the rich and to the poor, to the poor and to the rich equally, or, if you put any inequality in it, let it be in favor of the little ones who most need this alms.

May your hands be always blessing like those of Saint Meletius, the amiable Bishop of Antioch, or of Saint Francis de Sales. Be Saint Francis de Sales of Poitiers.

Don't rush your walk too much. No slowness, but no haste, unless the fire is at hand sound of some soul.

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Keep your style elegant, noble, delicate, crystal clear as your thought. Above all, explain the divine text in the manner of ancient centuries: it is fruitful and infinitely varied. Do not confine yourself to Greek and Roman forms: this is a beautiful part of the beautiful, but the complete beautiful is only in the Sacred Books. Be from Athens, be from Rome; but above all be from Jerusalem, be biblical.

Preach to the faithful on your own, as much as your health will allow. But also preach the priests; I would like to see you preach the retreats to them yourself. For, oh my God, what insipid mediocrities sometimes take charge of this ministry! Besides, one must be a pastor oneself and a father, in order to teach fathers and pastors well.

Do like the sun: show yourself to your people without lavishing yourself. From time to time, put on some veil of mysterious vapor, without ceasing to be transparent, on the star of your august character.

I come back to this word which is the basis of holiness for a bishop: to imitate the goodness (I adore this word), the kindness and the gentleness of the Son of God. Pass through doing good, healing all languor and all infirmity, evangelizing the kingdom of God through towns and cities, laying hands on little children and smiling holy on mothers.

Visit hospitals, without compromising your frail health. Also visit the doves of Carmel, if you are lucky enough to have one, or those of Annecy, and the worker bees of educational establishments run by nuns. Thus open channels of grace for the irrigation of all your lands.

Be the model pastor, LOVED BY GOD, MARY AND MEN, as you have always been and will be more in addition to me until the end, dear Lord and son".

An archpriest of Notre-Dame de Chartres,
Mr. Pierre-Alexandre LECOMTE,
By Canon Goussard, p. 116 to 120, Chartres, 1894.

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